

The Conspiracy

Text: Acts 23: 1 – 11, 12 – 35

In the 23rd chapter of Acts we find Paul in the city of Jerusalem- under the arrest of the Roman government just as had been prophesied by Agabus in chapter 21

Paul hadn't made a wrong choice or mistake – he was following the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Remember he had been warned by The prophet Agabus and others that he would be bound – imprisoned when he arrived in Jerusalem. God had given him advance warning so there would be no confusion – that he had made a mistake in following God's leading.

It can be confusing—we're trying to do our best for God- yet trouble seems to find us.

We shake our heads even saying aloud – I don't understand – why is this happening? God ... I don't get it!

Right Choices

One of the things that scares us as people who want to follow God's Will – is making the wrong choice.

The prophecy about Paul's imprisonment was right and Paul made the right decision despite all the pleading and crying of friends not to go to Jerusalem.

But if Paul did the right thing why was he in so much trouble again?

The Realization

Read Acts 23: 1-11

Verse 6

Paul realizing he was in an impossible situation turned the tables on the council using the old technique "*divide and conquer*"– He appealed to the Pharisees

"... Brothers, I am a Pharisee as were my ancestors! And I am on trial because my hope is in the resurrection of the dead!"

He told the truth ... just in such a way that drove a wedge right down the middle of an age old argument between the Pharisees and Sadducees

The Pharisees believed in a physical resurrection of the dead

The Sadducees did not believe in resurrection, in angels or spirits.

The Pharisees sprang to Paul's rescue – "We see nothing wrong with him," they shouted. "Perhaps a spirit or and angel spoke to him." Or perhaps the perfect chance to stick to their enemies.

The argument becomes physically violent with Paul at center of a tug of war.

Paul had to be rescued by force by the Roman commander and returned to the fortress.

The Dust settles

As soon as they came to their senses the council regrouped – probably even more incensed now for how he had made public fools out of them!

40 members of the Jerusalem council become singularly focused on one thing. To Murder Paul

They swore an oath to each other – no food nor water until the deed is done.

A fraternity of extremists – became a brotherhood of assassins ... from which there would be no turning back!

This is not the Little Rascals he-man woman haters club.

→ If I asked you to name Abraham Lincoln's assassin most of you would tell me it was John Wilkes Booth but did you know that Booth lead a team of conspirators with plans to take down the government of the United States including the death of General Ulysses S. Grant, Vice President Johnson, and Secretary of State William H. Seward?

Yesterday's newspapers carried the story of carried the story of 22 year old man who was plotting to set off a 1,000 pound bomb outside the Federal Reserve building in lower Manhattan.

Evil works in the heart and plots destruction and death but ...

But **God is in control** of the lives of his people – he is reveals to Paul the next step

Between the violent outburst of the religious council and the murder plot
Jesus appears to Paul

To **encourage him** to tell him what was about to happen before it happened –
That he not only knows what is happening to us but that He is way ahead of the curve.

The Lord does this before the next morning before his nephew arrives with news of the plot to kill him.

God shows up when we are most in need assurance but not always in the way we are anticipating.

God not only wants to reveal His plan for your life He wants you to accept that plan trust Him.

Turn to **Joshua chapter 3: 5-17**

It was God's plan for His people to enter His promised land ... seems clear but it turned murky from fear of making a wrong choice. Obeying God is never the wrong choice!

The Israelis were about to do what God had long planned for them – enter the land he had promised them

Note God's instructions to Joshua just before crossing the Jordan River
The Jordan was at a season of flooding – rushing currents – most difficult time to ford it!

But it wasn't until **all** the priests' feet carrying the ark got into the water that the miracle occurred. Leaders of the church are you listening? God has expectations for you as leaders!

The waters of Jordan didn't part first – feet had to enter first
“For without faith it is impossible to please God...” [Hebrews 11:6](#)

Faith has ingredients – two of them are *action* and *obedience*

It took 40 years for the Israelis to get to this point! 40 years earlier the earlier generation was at the same crossroads!

But they chose safety first as their course of action - because they were afraid

[Joshua 2:23](#) the report of the two spies - second time around –“**The Lord has given us the land, people are terrified of us.**”

Nothing had changed – the inhabitants of that land had been terrified 40 years earlier!

The safe way is not always God's way and difficulties do not indicate that you're out of God's will.

What do you really want from God?

Peace and rest, prosperity and success?

What does God want you to possess?

Author Rachel Held Evans, wrote this about why the younger generation called Millennials (1982 –2004) are dropping out attending church.

“What Millennials really want from church is not a change in style but a change in substance. ... We want to ask questions that don't have predetermined answers. We want to be challenged to live lives of holiness, not only when it comes to sex, but also when it comes to living simply, caring for the poor and oppressed, pursuing reconciliation, engaging in creation care and becoming peacemakers. You can't hand us a latte and then go about business as usual and expect us to stick around. We're not leaving the church because we don't find the cool factor there; we're leaving the church because we don't find Jesus there.”

Jesus words ... [John 14:27](#) (AMP)

“Peace I leave with you; My [own] peace I now give *and* bequeath to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid” [Stop allowing yourselves to be agitated and disturbed; and do not permit yourselves to be fearful and intimidated and cowardly and unsettled.]

Deep down this is what we long for.

This is our inheritance, but how do we take possession of it?

Paul's life was hanging by a thread – 40 men who vowed to neither eat nor drink until he was dead! Or was it? The Plot to kill Paul was the very thing that forced the Roman commander into escorting Paul to Rome and directly to Governor Felix

God was in control Paul' journey to Jerusalem was only a stop over a necessary one because he was to receive a full military escort to Rome – and he had to scare the Roman commander enough to get him there.

God's Plan always involves a promise. **FAITH** is the means by which we receive it – Add *trust* in with the ingredients of *action* and *obedience*.

Jeremiah 29:11-14 (NLT)

“For I know the plans I have for you,” says the LORD. “They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.”

Whatever you are facing – don't be afraid to make the right choice – don't be afraid to trust God to follow his leading –

He is about to show up and give you the encouragement you are so much in need of.

Let's Pray